



NEWS RELEASE

US DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR ■ BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
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Public Input Sought for Resource Management Plans for Sierra, Otero, and Dona Ana Counties

BLM to Host Four Public Open House “Scoping Meetings”

LAS CRUCES, NM – The Bureau of Land Management will host four ‘open house’ scoping meetings to solicit the public’s ideas on future management of public land in Sierra, Otero, and Dona Ana Counties, New Mexico. BLM will use the information from these meetings to guide the preparation of two resource management plans and an associated environmental impact statement. The announcement was published in the January 28, 2005, *Federal Register*.

“We look forward to working with the public throughout this three-year planning process,” said Ed Roberson, BLM, Las Cruces Field Office Manager. “Our goal for the plans is to guide future resource management for the long-term needs of future generations. We want to continue to make decisions for multiple uses and interests.”

The three-county planning area is about 6.65 million acres. Of that, 2.88 *million* acres are BLM-administered public land; *an additional 5.01 million acres have BLM-administered Federal minerals*. This area is currently managed using the direction of two resource management plans – one prepared in 1986 and the other in 1993.

The purpose of resource management plans is to provide a framework for managing public land and for allocating resources over a planning period of 15 to 20 years. During the life of a plan, it is evaluated periodically to see if it remains adequate and continues to meet legislative and policy requirements, and land use and resource needs. If it does not meet the requirements and needs, the plan is revised or amended. This involves the preparation of a new plan to replace the existing resource management plan.

BLM has determined that some of the management decisions in the existing plans for the three-county area are not current with changing circumstances, resource conditions, and/or policies. Population growth in the Southwest, in general, and especially in southern New Mexico has resulted in increased urban-rural interface. As a consequence, increased use of public land and surrounding areas have an effect on how the BLM manages public land.

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With continued growth, land uses will continue to increase. In response, BLM is changing its management emphasis on many of its resource and land use programs. These changes warrant analysis and updating or amending BLM's current management direction. In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, BLM will prepare an EIS to assess the effects of implementing the new plans.

BLM is hosting four public open house scoping meetings. Meetings will take place from 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. Please call the field office (505.525.4300 or 877.877.0918) for specific venues. Dates are as follows:

March 15 – Las Cruces

March 16 – Alamogordo

March 22 – Truth or Consequences

March 23 – Anthony

Each open house will begin with a brief overview of the planning and EIS process. Prior to and following the presentation, the public will be encouraged to review informational displays and discuss the plans and EIS with BLM representatives. Comments on the resource management plans and EIS will be accepted throughout the planning process. In order to be useful in guiding the direction of the planning process, preliminary comments must be received by the end of the 60-day scoping period (March 31, 2005).

Completion of the draft plans and EIS is anticipated in Fall 2005. The draft will be released to the public for a 90-day review period, during which time BLM will conduct public hearings to gather comments on the draft document.

BLM, an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior, manages approximately 13.4 million acres of public land in New Mexico. BLM is responsible for management of public land and resources based on the principles of multiple use and sustained yield, a combination of uses that take into account the long-term needs of future generations for renewable and nonrenewable resources.

For more information or updates on the planning effort, log onto the project web site at www.nm.blm.gov.